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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAQ; AFRICA

IRAQ

1. "Rebuilding Iraq remains crucial"

The leading Globe and Mail opined (8/21): "Horrific as Tuesday's bomb attack was on Iraq's United Nations headquarters, no one who has followed events in that country can be surprised that matters have taken a turn for the worse. From the moment the United States attacked Saddam Hussein, it was clear that handling the instability caused by his departure might be as difficult as dealing with Iraq while he was in power, if not more so. The question is what Washington and the international community should do about it.... The bombing of the UN clearly marks an escalation of anti-American and anti-Western tendencies in Iraq.... This too should come as little surprise. It was all but inevitable that a host of anti-U.S. forces both inside and outside Iraq would seize on any opportunity to imperil the reconstruction effort, in order to make the West look as bad as possible and to drive disaffected Iraqis into the arms of the militant Islamist movement. There are any number of countries nearby with extremists to spare, including Syria, Iran and Saudi Arabia. That is precisely why the United States and others involved in the effort to rebuild Iraq should stay the course, if not redouble their efforts to bring about stability as quickly as possible. Any sign of weakness - any sign, for example, that President George W. Bush is wavering as a result of simplistic criticisms that his country is in for 'another Vietnam'...will only encourage anti-U.S. forces in Iraq and elsewhere.... Rather than pull staff or troops out, the United States needs to provide more of both, and other countries need to help as part of a broad UN effort.... Rebuilding countries - or, rather, helping a beaten and starving populace to rebuild them - is not easy. It took years in Japan and even longer in Germany, and cost billions of dollars to finance. The reconstruction is likely to take just as long in both Iraq and Afghanistan.

American and international forces don't want to take too much on themselves for fear of being seen as occupiers. Yet if they don't do enough, quickly enough, they will be seen as uncaring. More than anything, they cannot give up."

2. "Sometimes it is 'us' and 'them'"

Columnist Marcus Gee observed in the leading Globe and Mail (8/21): "If Tuesday's bombings in Jerusalem and Baghdad did anything, they served to remind us what we are up against. Any act of terrorism is savage, senseless, cowardly - the past couple of years have exhausted our language of condemnation. But these were acts of particular barbarism.... The United Nations says it will stay, despite Tuesday's attack, and that is good. However, Washington has had trouble persuading other countries to join a multinational force that would help relieve U.S. troops. Those countries should step up to help. The United States, in return, should be more willing to share interim control of Iraq with the UN and other international partners. In the Holy Land, confronting terrorism means taking a still harder line with countries in the region that support violence, such as Syria, Iran and Sudan. It means supporting Israel when it acts in its own defence to combat terrorist organizations. It means pressing the Palestinian leadership to crack down on terrorist groups. It means encouraging both sides to move toward a negotiated settlement that would help undermine support for terrorism. Just as important, confronting terrorists requires clear thinking about us and about them. And, yes, sometimes, there is an 'us' and a 'them.' This is one of those times. The fight we are waging is nothing less than the fight between civilization and barbarism. If Tuesday's murderous bombings did not prove that, then they proved nothing."

3. "A truckful of evil"

The conservative National Post editorialized (8/21): "The ongoing guerrilla war against U.S. troops in Iraq provides ample proof that, contrary to the Polyannish predictions offered by some American officials, a

substantial number of Iraqis are bristling at the presence of foreign troops in their land. But Tuesday's truck bombing of the United Nations Iraqi headquarters in Baghdad...shows that the United States is dealing with something far more pathological than militant nationalism. The function of United Nations personnel in Iraq is to provide aid and alleviate hardship. Yet the terrorists who struck on Tuesday were willing to slaughter these good Samaritans merely so they could discredit the United States and its ability to maintain order.... Those who delight in skewering the U.S. war effort have pointed out that Iraq is home to more terrorists now, in the wake of its liberation, than when it suffered under Saddam Hussein's jackboot. That's true - but it misses the point. The perceived threat from Iraq, as we have noted often in this space, was not merely garden-variety terrorism - it was the intersection of terrorism, rogue power and weapons of mass destruction.... Iraq is now a magnet for Arab and Muslim terrorists worldwide.... Washington should warn Tehran, Riyadh and Damascus that if they wage war against the United States through terrorist proxies, they will be treated accordingly. Another crucial ingredient in any terrorist struggle is the support of the local civilian population. Despite the terrorists' best efforts, the United States must win over as many Iraqis as possible by providing them with a better life - which means food, clean water, dependable electric power and as much security as circumstances permit. A homegrown army and police force should also be trained and deployed as soon as possible. In blowing up foreign soldiers and aid workers, terrorists can hide behind the conceit that they are martyrs and patriots. Once they are forced to confront Iraqis in uniform, it will become apparent to all that they are merely murderous thugs bent on denying the country a better future."

14. "Attack in Iraq must be answered by greater international effort"
The left-of-center Vancouver Sun commented (8/20): "It is a struggle to imagine what was going through the minds of the terrorists who engineered the massive truck bomb attack on the United Nations compound in Baghdad on Tuesday afternoon. What did they imagine they would accomplish by killing and wounding dozens of civilians whose only purpose was to help to rebuild an Iraq stricken by war and decades of brutal dictatorship? The question may contain the seeds of the answer. The purpose was perhaps a coldly conceived, brutal act of terror against a soft target and aimed with malign forethought at the vanguard of civilian reconstructors. The message to the UN and to countries contemplating involvement in the rebuilding of Iraq is that they take their lives in their hands undertaking such work.... Iraq needs a functional, not necessarily perfect, level of security behind which the work of reconstruction can go on. And essential to that task must be a recognition by Washington that, like it or not, it is in the business of nation-building in Iraq. So far Washington has envisaged only a highly restricted role for the UN in the work of reconstruction. The attack on the UN in Baghdad should give Washington stark forewarning of the quagmire that awaits it if the terrorists succeed in isolating the coalition from the international community. Equally, the international community - Canada included - must recognize this attack on it cannot be allowed to serve the bombers' purpose."

15. "The tragedy of denial"
Under the sub-heading, "A truck bomb forces the United Nations to confront terrorism," the nationalist Ottawa Citizen observed (8/20): "In the weeks after the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks on the United States, the United Nations Security Council passed various resolutions calling on its members to cut off funding and support for terrorist groups. Nevertheless, the 15-member council could not bring itself to define terrorism. Now that the UN itself has been attacked by terrorists, perhaps it can.... The attack, like the one that followed a few hours later in Israel, is to be condemned, and, no doubt, there will be Security Council resolutions to that effect. But will the UN grasp its deeper significance and its lesson? It's a sad irony that the UN has long been criticized as the patron of illiberal Arab-Muslim regimes.... Why would terrorists attack an institution that has been such a self-abasing apologist for Arab dictatorships? It is not hard to discern the 'mind' and the motive behind the Baghdad bombing. On one level, this attack, like the recent acts of sabotage on oil and water pipelines, is intended to undermine the efforts of the U.S. and its partners to foster a stable and democratic society in Iraq. The terrorists want to show that the U.S.

cannot provide the security Iraqis need to feel before they actively turn away from Saddam's lingering hold on the country. But there is also a deeper significance to this attack. Even though the UN has become an instrument of Third World appeasement, it is also regarded by Muslim extremists to embody western ideas of pluralism, human rights and cosmopolitanism.... The Islamists may have no rational political program beyond nihilism, but blowing up the UN headquarters, and killing a man like Mr. de Mello, who was once the UN's human rights commissioner, suggests a hatred for modernity, tolerance and globalism. How should the UN respond to this 'rejection'? It can start by having the courage to define terrorism.... The UN, for so many years, ignored or minimized the crimes of states known to sponsor terror. Perhaps the UN wanted simply to be an honest broker. Instead, it became weak and ineffective, and all the while still despised by the very people it hoped to appease.

AFRICA

16. "No tears for a brute"
Under the sub-heading, "Idi Amin's legacy was to entrench the cult of African strongmen," the nationalist Ottawa Citizen opined (8/21): "...Uganda was in bad shape when Mr. Amin took control, but he took his country to new depths. In the process, he entrenched a tradition that haunts the entire continent to this day, the cult of African strongmen - strongmen who plunder their countries' natural wealth for their personal gratification, all the while repressing their own people with sadistic, almost bestial glee.... Other African strongmen such as Charles Taylor and Robert Mugabe are spiritual descendants of Mr. Amin. Mr. Mugabe in particular, through his persecution of Zimbabwe's white farmers, has carried on Mr. Amin's legacy of Afro-centric racism.... Today, Robert Mugabe continues to confiscate white-owned farms and distribute them to his cronies, just as Mr. Amin confiscated property belonging to non-black Ugandans. Mr. Mugabe is condemning Zimbabwe to poverty, just as Mr. Amin did Uganda. There is a lesson here, and some hope. Mr. Amin's long exile was morally unsatisfying, but the best thing for Ugandans. And last week, Liberian dictator Charles Taylor surrendered power and went into exile in Nigeria. Even Mr. Mugabe is losing control, as his African neighbours begin to lose patience with him. The developed world has done much, and could always do more, to help Africa, but ultimately it is up to Africans themselves to stop producing military strongmen who plunder rather than govern."

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